

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 368

EXDIS

E. O. 11652 : GDS

TAGS : PINS, ET, CASC

SUBJ : TENNECO FIVE

REFS : ASMARA 0365, ADDIS 5576

1. THREE HOUR MEETING WITH GOVGEN ERITREA HELD MAY 20. VICEMIN SOLOMON TECLE, TENNECO'S LIAISON COL. YESUWORK, TENNECO'S WILSON AND BURTCHAEEL AND POL COUNSELOR ATTENDED.

2. GOVGEN OPENED WITH LENGTHY REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS ALONG FAMILIAR LINES. WHEN HE REACHED 7 POINT MESSAGE INVOLVING IEG IN NEGOTIATIONS HERETOFORE CONFINED TO ELF AND TENNECO GOVGEN SAID HE HAD SENT MORGHANI BACK WITH ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT; SUGGESTION THAT REPLY MIGHT TAKE TIME BE FULLY FORMULATED; AND QUERY WHETHER ELF WOULD NOT IN FACT PREFER STICK TO ORIGINAL POSITION OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH TENNECO NOT REPEAT NOT INVOLVING IEG. MORGHANI RETURNED AND LEFT GOVGEN WITH STRONG IMPRESSION THAT NON-INVOLVEMENT IEG ACCEPTABLE TO ELF.

3. GOVGEN THEN URGED TENNECO REPS WORK THROUGH MORGHANI WHO "RELIGIOUS LEADER WITH INFLUENCE IN AREA." GOVGEN FELT MORGHANI WOULD DO JOB IF PROVIDED WITH TENNECO LETTER EMPOWERING HIM TO TREAT.

4. MORGHANI THEN BROUGHT INTO ROOM. LENGTHY FENCING SESSION
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ENSUED. RESULT WAS AGREEMENT AS FOLLOWS: (A) TENNECO LETTER

DESIGNATING MORGHANI AS INTERMEDIARY; (B) TENNECO LETTER TO ELF FOR MORGHANI TO CARRY URGING EXPEDITIOUS FACE TO FACE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CAPTORS AND TENNECO REPS IN SAFE PLACE (PERHAPS KASSALA, SUDAN) IN PRESENCE ALL OR SOME HOSTAGES; (C) \$200,000 FOR MORGHANI IN ADDITION TO SUCH "REASONABLE RANSOM" AS CAPTORS MIGHT DEMAND WHEN TENNECO FIVE RELEASED. ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO GET MORGHANI MOST EXPEDITIOUSLY TO HIS ELF PRINCIPALS BY AIR.

5. MORGHANI WAS ASKED REPEATEDLY IN PROCESS WHETHER HE HAD ACCESS TO CAPTORS. HE WAS TOLD THAT IF HE DID NOT FEEL THAT HIS ACCESS OR INFLUENCE ADEQUATE HE SHOULD OPT OUT AND NO HARD FEELINGS. MORGHANI SAID HE DID HAVE ACCESS AND FELT CONFIDENT HE COULD DO JOB.

6. AS MEETING BROKE UP MORGHANI ASKED TO COME TO HOTEL "TO SETTLE DETAILS". WHEN HE APPEARED HE TOLD TENNECO REPS (A) THAT HE REQUIRED \$100,000 IMMEDIATELY AND THE BALANCE UPON THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES; (B) THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER HE COULD EFFECT THEIR RELEASE BUT THAT THE INITIAL \$100,000 WOULD COMPENSATE HIM FOR THE RISKS HE WOULD BE TAKING; (C) THAT HE FELT NO REPEAT NO OBLIGATION TO KEEP TRYING IF HIS INITIAL EFFORTS FAILED.

7. WILSON DECLINED MORGHANI'S PROPOSAL. MAINTAINED ORIGINAL OFFER (PLUS CURRENT EXPENSES AS NECESSARY NOW) BUT NOTED THAT IF MORGHANI DID NOT FEEL ABLE TO TAKE ON TASK AND ACCEPT PAYMENT UPON ITS SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION IT WAS BEST THEY PART NOW. MORGHANI THEN LEFT.

8. WILSON THEN TELEPHONED GOVGEN AT HOME; REPORTED FOREGOING; NOTED MORGHANI HAD IN EFFECT ATTEMPTED EXTORTION. GOVGEN REPORTEDLY QUITE UPSET; AGREED MORGHANI NOW USELESS; SAID HE (MORGHANI) ENJOYS POWERFUL LOCAL SPONSORSHIP; URGED TENNECO REPS RETURN TO HIS OFFICE MAY 21 (A) BE PRESENT AT CONFRONTATION OF MORGHANI WITH UNNAMED "SPONSOR" BELIEVED CONNECT TO BROTHERHOOD (MORGHANIYYA) "TO DISCREDIT MORGHANI"; (B) DISCUSS MORGHANI'S POSSIBLE DETENTION AND FURTHER INTERROGATION.

9. WILSON REQUESTS DEPARTMENT BRIEF TENNECO-HOUSTON OR FOREGOING, INCLUDING PARA 11 COMMENTSS.

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10. TENNECO REPS NOW PLANNING TENTATIVELY FLY TO KHARTOUM-KASSALA MAY 22.

11. COMMENT : (A) GOVGEN/SOLOMON TECLE MADE AMPLY CLEAR IEG PREFERS NOT REPEAT NOT BECOME INVOLVED; (B) ALTHOUGH MORGHANI SAID ALREADY HE IN ILL REPUTE WITH MORGHANIYYA, BROTHERHOOD CONNECTION MAY NONTHELESS PROVE DIFFICULT PROBLEM FOR GOVGEN AND IEG AS WELL AS POSSIBLY FOR TENNECO AND HOSTAGES.

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